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THE DECLARATION NOT TO DEFEND FORMOSA

by

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THE FLETCHER SCHOOL OF LAW AND DIPLOMACY

THE DECLARATION NOT TO DEFEND
FORMOSA, 1950

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Preface

While the subject of this thesis is pointed toward the decision of President Truman's January 5, 1950 Declaration not to defend Formosa in the interests of the Chinese Nationalists, certain other facets cannot be overlooked. They are important substantive accessories to that declaration. The primary specific point is the United States attitude toward China before the Declaration. Other points are the United States' attempts at isolationism immediately after World War II, the importance of Formosa in the island chain of defenses of national interest to the United States, the international legal status of Formosa, the predominant attitudes of Formosans, and the United States' position at the time we chose not to defend. Also of interest are the results of public opinion polls taken during the period concerned.

References to the Korean War are avoided, although it is recognized that the war precipitated a change in policy to isolate Formosa and thus take a firm stand in the Far East against Communism. It is recognized that President Truman's decision to use the Seventh Fleet in the Straits of Formosa to defend that island and to discourage Nationalist Forces from creating a second front was an extremely unimportant one, but it was forced by the Korean War. Had the war not occurred, there is a possibility that the President never would

have made that decision. One will never know what other events would have been changed had certain already historic events had never happened or had occurred at a different time under different circumstances.

Prelude

To provide a better perspective on American policy toward Formosa during 1950, the collapse of the Nationalist Government on mainland China and its retreat to the island of Formosa should be understood. This background should include, briefly, American orientation in world politics during and immediately after World War II domestic policies and the development of United States policy toward China during the period after World War II, with particular emphasis on developments in 1949 and early 1950 before the outbreak of the Korean War.

The aftermath of World War II inherited much of the successes, failures and unfinished business of the war. So much was expected and disillusionment had seldom been so great. The tendency of the United States to react with less urgency toward new shifts and alignments in world politics was compounded by belief in a set of assumptions which were no longer valid once the Axis powers had been defeated. The basic assumption was that in their own interests, members of the Grand Alliance would collaborate to reach a peace settlement in Europe and Asia and to solve world problems through the United Nations.¹ The anticipated period of peace captured the imagination of many statesmen but at the same time, pro-

¹Ruhl J. Bartlett, The Record of American Diplomacy, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 3rd ed. rev., 1960), p. 753.

vided an opportunity for many others to take advantage of the first few years of peace to advance their interests that had been interrupted by the war. The rise of Russian satellite movements and of Chinese Communism was apparent even before the victorious powers met at Potsdam. By then, the ambitions of the Chinese communists were already clear but many Americans, including President Truman, Secretary of State James Byrnes and others, despite warnings by Averell Harriman and General John R. Dean,² were inclined to practice their diplomacy with faith, honesty and fairness and were reluctant to believe the true nature of the Communist expansion and its implications for immediate and future United States security. As Herbert Feis stated:

This trend of mind and diplomacy during so critical a period was in one aspect an avoidance of the realities of difference with communism. In another, it was a search for a way to subvert these realities. When theory tyrannizes over facts, grief is apt to follow, but when facts of the moment tyrannize over theory, the chance of improvement is lost.³

Most American policy makers were traditionally oriented to the role of passive observers of the world scene and rarely that of active partners. They were not globally

²Herbert Feis, Between War and Peace, The Potsdam Conference (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1960), p. 78.

³Ibid., p. 73.

oriented and national interests were oriented toward domestic problems. To the Americans, victory over the Axis Powers would automatically foster the end of power conflicts, "...the end of America's time of troubles."⁴ Victory in World War II wished to revert to isolationism and other compatriots sensed that security required that they participate actively in world affairs. Failure of the Grand Alliance concept and public confusion were inevitable during the 1945-50 transition period when ideal expectations were out of harmony with the demanding preciseness of national politics and the equally demanding preciseness of international politics. During this transition period, the China problem became a predominant topic of interest.

China Policy

United States policy toward China during World War II anticipated that China would fill the power vacuum that would exist as a result of the total Japanese defeat. This anticipation was based on the fact that rival Chinese groups could be unified through some arrangements that would make China strong, united and democratic. Churchill, Eden and Stalin regarded this policy with skepticism.⁵ In any case, the exigencies of prosecuting

⁴Robert Endicott Osgood, Ideals and Self-Interest in America's Foreign Relations (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1953), p. 432.

⁵Robert E. Sherwood, Roosevelt and Hopkins, an Intimate History, (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1948), p. 716.

the war prevented the Allies from contriving any specific formula for post-war China. The United States policy remained strictly that of keeping China in the war on the Allied side and therefore organizing the combined strength of the various Chinese forces to achieve that end.⁶

While this was the existing policy, the principle objective to which United States policy was unreservedly committed was that all the Chinese political and ideological differences could be worked out in some form of a coalition government, by being "strong, united and democratic."⁷ To reach this objective, the United States sent two successive but unsuccessful representatives to China, Ambassador Patrick Hurley and General George C. Marshall. General Marshall, in an attempt to mediate the differences between the Nationalists and Communists, stayed in China for one year, but his mission was a failure.⁸

On January 6, 1947, President Truman terminated the mission and announced the recall of General Marshall. The General left China soon thereafter and withdrew the remainder of the American forces.⁹ Marshall's mission

⁶U.S. Department of State, United States Relations with China, (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1949), p. IV.

⁷See text of this policy in December, 1945, ibid., pp. 607-609.

⁸U.S. Relations with China, Chapter V.

⁹See statement of General Marshall, United States Relations with China, pp. 686-689.

represented the last real attempt of the United States at bringing a solution to China's problems.

While the year of 1947 witnessed a turning point in the United States policy toward Europe as evidenced in the Truman Doctrine¹⁰ and the subsequent Marshall Plan, the aforementioned doctrine was not considered practical to China because both Marshall and Acheson felt that massive intervention would have been required to rescue her from Communist control.¹¹ The decision not to apply to the Truman Doctrine to China raised questions concerning the administration's competence in the handling of the China problem.¹² Certain experts on Far Eastern Affairs were even charged as being pro-communists.¹³

After the failure of Marshall's efforts in China, there appeared to be five choices left open to the administration: to pull out, as Dean Acheson stated, "Lock stock and barrel";¹⁴ to cooperate further with the Kuo min tang and try to prevent their downfall through massive

¹⁰Francis O. Wilcox and Thorsten V. Kalijarvi, Recent American Foreign Policy, Basic Documents 1941-1951.

¹¹Joseph M. Jones, The Fifteen Weeks (February 21-June 5, 1947), (New York: The Viking Press, 1955), p. 196.

¹²H.B. Westerfield, Foreign Policy and Party Politics, Pearl Harbor to Korea, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2nd Ed., (1958), p. 256.

¹³Ross Y. Koen, The China Lobby in American Politics, (New York, The MacMillan Company, 1960), pp. 195-223.

¹⁴United States Relations with China, p. X.



aid; to allow existing programs of aid to continue to their termination, then to dissociate from the collapse of the nationalists; to court the Chinese Communists so as to prevent them from becoming too dependent on the Soviet Union.

By 1949, State Department officials considered the position of the Nationalists as hopeless. In November, 1948, in a paper to the administration, they recommended that the American public should be given an explanation as to the "inadequacies of the Chiang Kai-shek government." This paper stated further that there were two alternatives for the United States: "(1) to follow this course /go to the American public/, or (2) to continue to do all we can to support Chiang and accept the embarrassments that will accompany the disintegration of China.¹⁵ Truman and Marshall rejected the first alternative because they feared that public opinion was against Chiang and thus would be instrumental in administering the final blow to the Nationalist government. Their fears were not completely unfounded because a December, 1949 public opinion poll indicated that a slight majority of people familiar with the war opposed massive aid to the Nationalist government, in spite of the majority opinion that the China war was a real threat to world peace and

¹⁵ Walter Millis, The Forrestal Diaries, (New York: The Viking Press, 1951), p. 534.

1. The first part of the paper is devoted to a general discussion of the problem of the existence of solutions of the system of equations

2. The second part is devoted to the study of the properties of the solutions of the system of equations

3. The third part is devoted to the study of the properties of the solutions of the system of equations

4. The fourth part is devoted to the study of the properties of the solutions of the system of equations

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the Chinese communists took their orders from Moscow.¹⁶
 However, a poll taken about seven months earlier indicated public approval of significant aid to Chiang Kai-shek.¹⁷

While the Administration rejected the State Department's first alternative, they also were unwilling to accept the second. Instead, the United States drifted rapidly to and through a watch-and-wait attitude toward Communist China and a disengagement from economic and military aid to the Nationalist Chinese. While it was not desireable to openly court Chinese Communism, neither was it desireable to jeopardize any possible future relations.

By the summer of 1949, the United States still did not have any positive policy toward China, but there was

¹⁶Asked of 79% of a national sample who had heard or read of the war:

"Do you think the fighting in China is	Yes 45%
a real threat to world peace or not?"	No 12%
	No Opinion 12%

"Do you think the Chinese Communist	Yes 51%
take their orders from Moscow or	No 10%
Not?"	No Opinion 18%

"Would you favor or oppose sending	FAUDR 28%
Chiang Kai shek's Nationalist	Qualified Favor 4%
government about 5 Billion dol-	Oppose 34%
lars worth of goods and military	No Opinion 13%
supplies in the next year to try	
to keep China from going Commun-	
ist?"	

Public Opinion Quarterly, Spring, 1949, Vol. XIII,
 p. 158.

¹⁷Ibid.



a declaration of future intentions in a statement by Secretary of State Acheson. In regards to aid to foreign nations, including China, he said, "while the United States can with the best of intentions contribute substantial aid to a foreign government, it cannot guarantee that that aid will achieve its purpose. The achievement of that purpose must, in the final analysis depend upon the degree to which the recipient government and people make wise use of our assistance and take effective measures for self help."¹⁸ He made it clear that the communist regime was winning over a large number of supporters in spite of being guided by an imperialist regime while the Chinese Nationalists were losing despite extensive United States assistance and advice. But he remained convinced that our "traditional" policy toward the Far East remained valid. This policy was based on the following principles:

1. The U.S. desires to encourage in every way the development of China as an independent and stable nation able to play a role in world affairs suitable for a great and free people.
2. The U.S. desires to support the creation in China of economic and political conditions which will safeguard basic liberties and progressively develop the economic and social well being of its people.
3. The U.S. is opposed to the subjugation of China to any foreign power, to any regime acting in the interest of a

¹⁸Department of State Bulletin, Vol. 21, No. 528, August 15, 1949, "Basic Principles of U.S. Policy toward the Far East."

foreign power, and to the dismemberment of China by any foreign power, whether by open or clandestine means.

4. The U.S. will continue to consult with other interested powers, in the light of conditions in the countries concerned and in the Far East as a whole, on measures which will contribute to the continuing security and welfare of the peoples of that area.
5. The United States will encourage and support efforts of the United Nations to achieve these objectives and particularly to maintain peace and security in the Far East.¹⁹

While the principles of policy as stated were no different from previous principles, the preceding portions of the statement and certain events which occurred earlier should have been a clear indication to the Nationalists that further aid was in jeopardy. And indeed it was, because prior to Acheson's statement, the administration had already made significant cuts in aid to the Nationalists. In February, 1949, the administration decided to stop a shipment of \$60 million worth of military supplies of an additional \$125 million aid fund previously granted under the Eightieth Congress.²⁰ Secretary Acheson also rejected a proposal of fifty senators introduced in March in a bill providing up to \$1,500 million in credits for economic and military aid to the Nationalist government on the con-

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰Westerfield, Foreign Policy and Party Politics, p. 346.

dition that they accept American direction and supervision of its armed forces and pledge tax revenue of its major ports as collateral for the loan.²¹ Acheson did make a counter-proposal for aid to those areas outside Communist control amounting to \$54 million to be financed by the unexpected funds remaining ECA appropriation, due to expire on April 1, 1949. On June 30, the administration announced the withdrawal of all remaining American troops from China. Finally, the State Department issued the publication then known as the White Paper early in August defending the administration and attributing failure of United States policy in China to maladministration of Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalist government.

Recognition of Communist China

The rapid disintegration of the Nationalist forces on the mainland of China brought up the problem of possibly recognizing the obviously forthcoming Communist government. The official United States position was indicated in mid-1949.

Our view was that no benefit would be derived by any hasty individual act, that ...we thought this was a problem of sufficient complexity and seriousness that it should be approached with great caution

²¹John C. Campbell, United States in World Affairs, 1942-49, (New York: Harper Brothers, 1950), p. 285.

and no sense of haste.²²

In October 1949, Secretary Acheson announced the criteria for recognition of a new government. The criteria were that it had to: control the country it claimed to control; recognize its international obligations; and rule with the acquiescence of the people. Actually, the criteria were not any different than the principles he had stated two months earlier. However, the Communists had already clearly indicated that they had no intention of cooperating with the United States and had blasted the United States with its propaganda.²³ Five United States Information Services in Shanghai, Hankow, Peiping, Tientsin and Nanking were closed by the Chinese in July. George V. Allen, Assistant Secretary of State for Public Affairs declared that "This is a new and dramatic proof that Communist dictatorships...strike out the free flow of information immediately upon seizing power."²⁴ Moreover, the Chinese Communists refused to grant exit visas to many American military attaches and other personnel which resulted in a strong demand for remedial action

²²Department of State, Transcript of Proceedings, "Conference on problems of United States policy in China," p. 21.

²³Report of John Cabot (Shanghai), Department of State Bulletin, Vol. XX, No. 502, February 13, 1949.

²⁴Ibid., August 1, 1949, p. 153.

from the Secretary of State. The Communists ignored the United States' note and continued their harassment of Americans. The most publicized incident was the treatment of Angus Ward, United States Consul General at Mukden, whom the Communist had detained from late 1948 to November 1949.²⁵ Ward was finally released after repeated demands were ignored for one year, but his release did not set a precedence for the Communists in regards to other Americans who had been arbitrarily detained. The severe treatment of Americans and severe anti-American propaganda virtually shut off all possible roads toward a better understanding between the United States and the Chinese Communist regime. Under the circumstances, it made it difficult for the United States to grant immediate recognition of Red China. After the Peoples' Republic of China announced the inauguration on October 1, 1949, recognition was granted the next day by the Soviet Union and by Great Britain the following month. Several other countries granted recognition during the next few months, but the United States decided not to go along with them.

Public opinion, as indicated by a poll in November,

²⁵ See details of the Ward Incident in Department of State Bulletin, November 28, 1949, pp. 799-800.

1949 was generally opposed to recognition.²⁶ By the end of the year, many members of congress were concerned that the United States was on the verge of recognizing the Red Chinese government.²⁷

The Dilemma

In general, the administration's stand on the recognition by the end of 1949 was one of waiting "until the dust settled."²⁸ While the Chinese Communists' actions gave no indication that they were desirous of United States recognition, the United States remained patient. This act of non-recognition was not a policy of the United States, but instead was a reaction to an unfriendly attitude of the Chinese Communists toward the United States.

Historically, Formosa has always played the role of a key strategic position in the Western Pacific. Immediately after the war, Formosa was linked with American

²⁶ 76% of a national sample who had heard or read about the war in China were asked, "Do you think the U.S. should recognize the new government in China, being set up by the Communist Party-- that is do you think we should send an ambassador and have dealing with this government in China?"

Favor Recog 20%
Opposed 42%
No Opinion 14%

²⁷ New York Times, January 1, 1950.

²⁸ Military Situation in the Far East, pp. 1765-1766.

security in the Pacific, and its strategic importance was officially recognized by the State Department.

Strategic factors greatly influence the problem of Formosa. With the exception of Singapore no location in the Far East occupies such a controlling position.²⁹

Since the end of the war until January, 1950, the American policy was to maintain Formosa in friendly hands. However, the spread of the civil war through retreat of Chiang to Formosa raised questions whether or not to keep that island in friendly hands or to defend it became a subject of great debate.

Those who recognized the historic and contemporary strategic value of Formosa felt that its defense was an absolute necessity. Generally, these same officials also argued against the recognition of Red China. Many congressional leaders dwelt upon the strategic importance of China, particularly Senators Knowland and Smith. Both had made separate extensive trips to the Far East to determine if the opinions they had already formed were substantiated by facts.

Senator Smith, in personal correspondence with Secretary Acheson urged that under no conditions should the United States recognize the Chinese Communist government at that time /December, 1947/ and "under no conditions should we let Formosa fall into the hands of the

²⁹Department of State Bulletin, June 3, 1945, p. 1019.

Chinese Communists or under the domination of Russia.³⁰ He further justified the defense of Formosa because its loss to hostile hands would "definitely threaten our security." In another letter to the Secretary of State about a month later, Smith contended that the loss of Formosa would seriously "threaten our defense line...from Japan /to/--the Philippines."³¹

General MacArthur, then Supreme Allied Commander Pacific, stressed in his newspaper interviews the need to build up a strong defensive perimeter--sometimes known as the "MacArthur line"--along the islands of the Western Pacific. In naming the islands that should be included in the perimeter, MacArthur did not originally mention Formosa.³² However, Formosa must have been on his mind since he later stated:

My views on Formosa are pretty well known, I believe if you lose Formosa, you lose the key to our littoral line of defense and encompass TRUK. I believe the Philippines and Japan would both be untenable from our military point of view. Formosa cannot be taken by Red China as long as the United States maintains control of the sea and air. There is not the capacity, in my opinion to storm the gates

³⁰Military Situation in the Far East, p. 3315. Also Congressional Record, Senate, 81st Cong., 2nd Sess, Vol. 96, Part I, January 9, 1950, pp. 150-151.

³¹Ibid., pp. 154-155; Military Situation in the Far East, pp. 3316-3317.

³²The New York Times, March 2, 1949, p. 22.

of Formosa.... I believe that from our standpoint, we practically lose the Pacific Ocean if we give up or lose Formosa. I don't want you to misunderstand me. We haven't the faintest aggressive intent against Formosa. We do not need Formosa for our bases or anything else. But Formosa should not be allowed to fall into Red hands.³³

Thus, the proponents of the defense of Formosa generally felt that the island, being the only insular area without American bases from Sakhalin to Borneo was significant on the strategic map of the western Pacific. As one writer put it--

As long as Formosa is under the control of a friendly government the island can give no real concern to the United States, but if it fell into the hands of a hostile regime American interests in the Western Pacific could be jeopardized.³⁴

The question of Formosa naturally became a subject of the Joint Chiefs of Staff who at that time were General Dwight D. Eisenhower, General Omar Bradley, General Alfred Gruenther and Admiral L.A. Denfield. In a meeting with Secretary of Defense Johnson, the question was raised as to what the enemy could do in possession of Formosa.³⁵

³³Military Situation in the Far East, pp. 52-53.

³⁴Current History, Vol. 13, January, 1949 "Strategic Formosa," Russell H. Fifield, p. 220.

³⁵Military Situation in the Far East, p. 2756..

After lengthy discussions, no consensus of opinion could be obtained among the Joint Chiefs.³⁶ This is not to say that the Joint Chiefs did not recognize the strategic importance of Formosa. They were always in favor of keeping that island in friendly hands, but were reluctant to defend it by military means. They reaffirmed this view in August, 1949, and expressed concern over the political effect of the fall of Formosa on other areas with the U.S. defense perimeter.³⁷ A proposal for sending a United States military mission to Formosa was transmitted to the Joint Chiefs of Staff in September, but they rejected it and maintained their rejection until December, 1949.³⁸ By that time, they realized that the amphibious strength of the Communist Chinese navy was not formidable enough to mount a successful amphibious attack on the 300,000 troops on Formosa. The Joint Chiefs therefore changed their position and recommended a modest aid program to the Nationalists on Formosa.³⁹

The State Department had no new positive policy toward Formosa as a result of changing conditions. Secretary Acheson would employ diplomatic and economic means

³⁶Ibid., p. 2577.

³⁷Ibid., p. 2371.

³⁸Ibid., pp. 2664, 2678.

³⁹Ibid., pp. 902-903.

to keep Formosa out of hostile control, but would not fight for it by military means. As described by Secretary Acheson, the policy of the United States toward Formosa from October, 1948 to June 25, 1950 was as follows:

...It was understood and agreed that Formosa had strategic importance so far as the United States was concerned.

...that the strategic importance related to keeping Formosa out of the hands of a power which would be hostile to the United States, and did not concern occupying or using Formosa by the United States.

...in the existing condition and strength of the Armed Forces of the United States, it was not possible to commit or promise to commit any forces whatever...to the defense of Formosa.

...The State Department should, to the best of its ability, by diplomatic and economic means try to keep Formosa from falling into hands which were hostile to us.⁴⁰

This was not a new policy but a continuation of that policy previously mentioned which had been applied on the mainland.

Thus, differences of opinion concerning Formosa between the State Department, Congress and the Defense Department and the Joint Chiefs of Staff persisted. The differences were caused primarily by different evaluations of political and military power of the Nationalists on Formosa. In general, the State Department's policy was that Formosa was inseparable from American objectives

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 1672.

regarding Nationalist China, and that the fall of Formosa was inevitable, Congress's position was that the fall of Formosa would mean the complete downfall of the Nationalist regime and that every effort should be made to save it. The military's position was that the fall of Formosa was not inevitable with only modest American aid. All parties, however, did agree on its strategic importance.

In December, the Secretary of Defense had insisted that Formosa should not be allowed to fall, and a new proposal, based on a re-study by the Joint Chiefs, was submitted to the President prior to his departure to Key West. Secretary Acheson accompanied the President. The new proposal recommended a military mission to Formosa and an amendment to the China Aid Act of 1948 recommending additional funds, but the State Department did not concur with the proposal.⁴¹ On December 22, President Truman met with Johnson and indicated that while he did not disagree with the military considerations of the Department of Defense on the strategic importance of Formosa, but there were also "political problems" involved which should be discussed with the State Department.⁴² Clearly, the State Department had convinced the President that their policy regarding Formosa was the correct policy.

On December 23, 1949 the Secretary of State issued

⁴¹Ibid., pp. 1674-75, 2577.

⁴²Ibid., p. 2578.

a secret policy information paper to the Voice of America and other United States information offices.⁴³ Basically, its purpose was to instruct United States information officers in giving a counter-argument to those who demanded American defense of Formosa. They were instructed to play down the misconceived idea of the strategic value of Formosa, to indicate that its fall would by no means threaten the security of the United States, to disclaim that this country had any intention whatever of intervening militarily to save Formosa, and to emphasize the fact that the collapse of the Nationalist regime would be nothing beyond normal expectation.

The contents of the Policy Information leaked from an unknown source to the press. On January 3, 1950 a United Press dispatch from Tokyo approximated the content of that instruction, and it was alleged that the leak occurred in General MacArthur's headquarters.⁴⁴ At a later date, Secretary Acheson admitted that he was fully responsible for the dispatch of this instruction since it was issued by the Public Affairs Division of the State Department with the approval of Secretary of State. It was intended to instruct information officers as to the content of their broadcast material in order to mitigate the

⁴³ U.S. Department of State, Public Affairs Area--Policy Advisory Staff (Special Guidance No. 28, December 23, 1949) Policy Information Paper--Formosa.

⁴⁴ Military Situation in the Far East, pp. 1675-76.

psychological impact of the Fall of Formosa to the Communists.⁴⁵ Acheson felt that the guidance was general in character and did not reflect in any fixed policy of the administration. The Committee on Armed Services and the Committee on Foreign Relations of the Senate did not hold this view. In their opinion, the Policy Information paper was "an actual statement of policy on the part of the United States Department of State in which we announced to our foreign representatives that Formosa was not of strategic importance to the United States and that its control by the Communist forces would not imperil our position in the Far East...no matter how the directive is explained, it reflects little credit to the honor and dignity of the United States."⁴⁶ In spite of Secretary Acheson's attempt to play down the importance of the Policy Information paper, the paper was consonant with a policy that had already been decided on. Essentially, "...there were two studies made, in September and October as to the imminence and danger...that the fall would occur...probably in the year 1950."⁴⁷ In addition, General Wedemeyer, representing the Army General Staff, recommended to the Assistant Secretary of State for Public Affairs, on August 26, 1949 to "...consider information measures designed

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 1682.

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 3589.

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 1672.

to...minimize the ill effects on the governments and peoples of western-oriented nations and particularly those of the Far East," should Formosa be lost.⁴⁸ Whether Wedemeyer's memorandum reflected the view of the Joint Chiefs of Staff or just that of the Army is not known.

On January 1, 1950, the New York Times reported that on December 29, the National Security Council had made the decision that no military mission would be sent to Formosa. It was also reported that the Council had recommended to the President that no military action by the United States in defense of Formosa was strategically important, "...but not important enough to risk the creation of another 'Spanish situation' in which the Soviet Union might back the Chinese Communists in an assault on Formosa and the United States might mastermind the defense," and that American occupation of Formosa was not justified.⁴⁹

The NSC decision disturbed the Republican leaders of the Senate. Senator Knowland was urged by ex-President Hoover to give naval protection to Formosa and on the same day, Senator Robert Taft, in a press conference, called

⁴⁸Memorandum of Lieutenant General Albert Wedemeyer, General Staff Corps, for George V. Allen, Assistant Secretary of State for Public Affairs, August 26, 1949, subject: Current Position of the United States with Respect to Formosa.

⁴⁹The New York Times, January 1, 1950.

for defense of Formosa in the event of attack.⁵⁰

The White Paper

By December, as mentioned previously, the majority of the American people who were aware of the war and believed that it was inspired by the Soviet Union and posed a threat to world peace, still felt that no massive aid should be provided Chiang. This shift in public attitude from an earlier survey could well have been caused by the publication of The China White Paper on July 30, 1949.⁵¹

As Secretary Acheson stated in his Letter of Transmittal of the document--

This is a frank record of an extremely complicated and most unhappy period in the life of a great country to which the United States has long been attached by ties of closest friendship. No available item has been omitted because it contains statements critical of our policy or might be the basis of future criticism. The inherent strength of our system is the responsiveness of the government to an informed and critical public opinion.⁵²

In spite of the administration's interest in the

⁵⁰The New York Times, January 3, 1950.

⁵¹Originally issued as United States Relations with China with special reference to the period 1944-1949, Department of State Publication 3573, Far Eastern Series 30.

⁵²The China White Paper, p. III. "Italics Mine"

responsiveness of public opinion, Tyman P. Van Slyke, in his introduction to The China White Paper, felt that it "was issued to counter largely Republican criticism."

Van Slyke also stated that President Truman believed his two goals of the White Paper--objectivity and justification--were compatible. As it turned out, his--and Acheson's--critics found the White Paper neither objective nor convincing.⁵³

Congressional criticism was not isolated to the Republican party but crossed party lines. One democrat, Senator McCarran of Nevada predicted that Acheson's policy would bring "all Asia under communist control "in a short time."⁵⁴ Another democrat, Representative Cox of Georgia called the White Paper a "face saving device" and an "alibi."⁵⁵ Senator Martin stated that the White Paper amounted to an "oriental Munich" which even its proponents could not claim would bring peace.⁵⁶ He further contended that the only constructive note in the entire White Paper was the "...apparent fact that our policy-makers have at long last realized that the communist conspiracy is worldwide and that its penetration into China

⁵³The China White Paper, Introduction.

⁵⁴The New York Times, August 6, 1949.

⁵⁵Ibid.

⁵⁶The New York Times, August 8, 1949.

is a threat to all of China's neighbors."⁵⁷

In the House of Representatives, Walter Judd charged sixteen instances of omission, falsification or distortion. Secretary Acheson answered the allegations, point by point, and reiterated the content of the White Paper.

It is insinuated that documents were deliberately omitted in order to falsify the record. These insinuations are not supported by any evidence. They could not be supported because there is not one iota of truth in them.... I plainly stated that this volume (White Paper) is not 'the full historical record' of the period covered. I repeat that it is a fair and honest record.⁵⁸

The Nationalist circles both here and abroad, reactions to the White Paper were, on the whole, surprisingly mild. When press reports first indicated late in July that the document was about to be published, the Chinese Nationalist Ambassador, V.K. Wellington Koo, was reported to have made "representations" to the State Department--"that such publication...could only aid the cause of the Chinese Communist forces and depress the morale of the people in free China."⁵⁹ Later, Ambassador Loo admitted that his government might have been guilty of "acts of commission and omission" in the past.⁶⁰

⁵⁸Department of State Bulletin, Vol. 21, No. 531, September 5, 1949, pp. 350-352, 359. The "sixteen instances" are contained herein.

⁵⁹The New York Times, August 5, 1949.

⁶⁰The New York Times, August 8, 1949.

General Chen Cheng, the governor of Taiwan was quoted as saying,

The White Paper has awakened us. We must now start on the road of self-help. Hence publication of the White Paper will do us no harm.⁶¹

Not all Nationalist reaction was mild, however, Dr. Fu Szunien, the President of Taiwan University and long a leader of China's anti-communist intellectuals felt that all parties concerned were responsible for the plight of the free Chinese,--"however, the U.S. Government which had caused our government to come to such a pass...won't assume any responsibility and cannot justify itself by publication of a paper black or white."⁶²

The first official view of the Chinese Nationalists appeared in the New York Times on August 17. In it, the Nationalists noted, with satisfaction, that two common views were shared. These were that the--"Chinese Communists are thorough Marxists and tools of Moscow" and that--"the Soviet Union has violated, both in letter and in spirit, the treaty of friendship and alliance between China and the Soviet Union, concluded in 1945." However, the Nationalists were not enthusiastic over the contents of the White Paper.

⁶¹Ibid.

⁶²Ibid.

At the same time, the Chinese government declares that it takes serious exception to the views and statements on many other important questions contained in the White Paper.⁶³

The Nationalists did not say with which views and statements they took exception because it would be "to the detriment of the traditional friendship between the Chinese and American people," but that at some later date would state--"more fully--its position and relevant facts with regard to various complex subjects dealt with...for the information of the Chinese and American public so as to further the mutual understanding and cordial relations between the two peoples."⁶⁴ It appears that the Chinese Nationalists did not want to create any further undesirable publicity which might arouse the American public against their cause.

As it was shown previously, the opinion of the general public during early 1949 was in favor of Chiang and the Nationalists but by the end of the year, massive aid to the Nationalist received unfavorable reception. The majority of the attentive public--those who maintain an interest in the affairs of government⁶⁵--appeared to

⁶³The New York Times, August 17, 1949.

⁶⁴Ibid.

⁶⁵James N. Rosenau, Public Opinion and Foreign Policy, (New York, Random House, 1961). The author differentiates between the mass public and attentive public--the former consisting of 75-90 percent of the population and the latter composing the remainder of the population.

have become disenchanted with the situation in China much earlier and the publication of the White Paper only enforced their opinion that further support of Chiang was hopeless. In May, 1949, those who had an opinion favored a "hands off, do nothing" or a "lost cause now" policy by a ratio of two to one against those who thought that some aid should be furnished.⁶⁶

In September, 1949, another poll of the public who had heard or read anything about the White Paper indicated that only one percent of that group thought we should

⁶⁶(AIPO of May 27, 1949, Education group)

What do you, yourself think the U.S. should do about China?	Leave alone, hands off, do nothing	43%
	Too late to do anything, lost cause now	4
	Help somehow; food, arms, money, etc.	22
	Miscellaneous	2
	Don't know	14
	Unfamiliar	15

help China.⁶⁹ There appear to be some incongruities in the poll since a larger percentage favored help to Chiang Kai Shek than to China, possibly indicating a minority favoring the Nationalists on Formosa rather than on the China mainland.

The Legal Status of Formosa

Prior to 1949, the Allied Powers and the members of the United Nations appeared to be in agreement in respect to the status--and future status--of the island of

⁶⁹(AIPO of September 18, 1949, of 36 percent who heard or read anything about the U.S. government's recent report /White Paper/ on China.)

What is your opinion of the way the government has handled the China situation?

Disapproval (Very poor, U.S. blundered)	53%
Approval (Very good, U.S. did best it could)	26%
U.S. should help China	1
U.S. should stay out of China	2
Don't know	18

What is your opinion of Chiang Kai-shek?

Generally unfavorable	56%
Generally favorable	24
No opinion	20

Do you think the U.S. should or should not try to help Chiang Kai shek

Should not	60%
Should	23
No Opinion	17

Public Opinion Quarterly, Vol. XIII, Winter, 1949.

Formosa.

It appears that the Cairo Declaration of 1942 was an unimportant piece of the foundation for Allied policy toward Formosa. The Declaration, resulting from the first Cairo Conference in November, 1943, read in part:

It is their /the United States, China, and Great Britain/ purpose that Japan be stripped of all the islands in the Pacific which she has seized or occupied since the beginning of the First World War in 1914 and has stolen from the Chinese, such as...Formosa... shall be restored to the Republic of China.⁷⁰ (*Italics mine*)

Russia was not at war with Japan at the time of the Cairo Conference, and as a result, was not a signatory to the declaration. However, at the Teheran Conference, Stalin replied that, "although he could make no commitments he thoroughly approved...all its /the Declaration/ contents."⁷¹

At the Potsdam Conference, efforts to obtain Russia's formal agreement to the Cairo Declaration failed because, in justification, Stalin claimed that Russia was still at peace with Japan. This was one of the reasons that Russia did not become a signatory to the Potsdam Declaration. Paragraph (8) of the Proclamation, issued on July 26, 1945, specified that: "The terms of the Cairo

⁷⁰United States Department of State, "The Conference at Cairo and Teheran, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1961, p. 324.

⁷¹Ibid., pp. 565-568.

Declaration shall be carried out."⁷² When the Allied victory over Japan became imminent, Russia declared war on that nation, and in a statement handed to the Japanese Ambassador, Soviet Foreign Minister Molotov declared:

Taking into the consideration the refusal of Japan to surrender, the Allies approached the Soviet Government with a proposal to join the war against Japanese aggression.... Faithful to its obligations to its Allies, the Soviet Government accepted the proposal of the Allies and adhere to the statement of the Allied Powers of July 26, 1945 /Potsdam Proclamation/.... As of 9 August, the Soviet Union will consider it is in a state of war with Japan.⁷³

Thus, the Soviet Union finally agreed to adhere to the terms of the Cairo Declaration.

The Instrument of Surrender of the Japanese Empire, signed and accepted by Japan and the Allied Powers, reiterated the provisions of the Cairo Declaration and the Potsdam Proclamation. Its provisions stated in part:

The Japanese Government and the Japanese Imperial General Headquarters, hereby accept the provisions set forth in the declaration issued by the heads of Government of the United States,

⁷²United States Department of State, "The Conference of Berlin (Potsdam)," Foreign Relations of the United States, 1960, p. 927.

⁷³Ibid., p. 1747.

China, and Great Britain on July 26,
1945, at Potsdam.⁷⁴

Even today, there appears to be a question as to the international legal status of Formosa. Frank P. Morello, in his book, The International Legal Status of Formosa, covers the subject briefly but well. While it is felt in some circles that the claims of Red China may be valid under certain circumstances, Mr. Morello probably struck the crux of the situation when he stated:

Except for the claims of Red China, whose own status is questionable, it can be said that the occupation of Formosa by the Nationalist Government has been undisturbed. In addition, this de facto exercise of governmental authority has been continuous for nineteen years. The possession of Formosa by the Nationalist Government has been maintained by an assertion of right. It follows that if the principle of prescription, as interpreted and applied within the framework of international law, it is to be accepted in the case of China, then there can be no lawyer's doubts as to the legitimacy of Nationalist China's title to Formosa.⁷⁵

To use a layman's terms, possession is nine-tenths of the law, and the Nationalists had possession, whether the Communists, the Formosans, or the rest of the world liked it or not.

⁷⁵Frank P. Morello, The International Legal Status of Formosa, (The Hague, Martinus Nijhoff, 1966), p. 92.

The Claims of the Formosans

The Formosans, or Taiwanese, wanted a complete separation from both Chinas. They neither wanted to be conquered by the communists nor did they desire to be dominated by the Nationalists. Their views were based on two assumptions--

- 1) They claimed that the Cairo Declaration is not valid because it violated the terms of the Atlantic Charter, specifically that they did not have the right to self determination.
- 2) The predominantly Chinese ethnic origin of the populus did not necessarily make them Chinese. Their argument was based basically on the fact that they had been ruled by the Japanese since May 8, 1895. Therefore the Chinese had no claim on them. Long political separation and, finally, misrule by the Chinese after 1945 had given the Formosans right to independence.

Probably, the strongest argument against Nationalist Chinese domination was in the form of Government or rule that they brought to the island. As one writer stated:

...a second look around Formosa turns up plenty of evidence of the same kind of mismanagement, political corruption, military rivalries and lack of unity that brought defeat to the Nationalists on the Mainland. ...the peoples' hatred of Mainland Chinese is evident everywhere on the island. ...They /The Formosans/ respect order and efficiency; they want self government.⁷⁶

⁷⁶U.S. News and World Report, "Why the U.S. Isn't to Defend Formosa," Joseph From, Vol. 27, December 30, 1949, pp. 15-17.

The Formosans, despite the fact that they were exploited by the Japanese for fifty years, felt that reverting to Chinese rule in any form was bad. They were quite disillusioned and as one Formosan replied to an American officer, "You only dropped the atom bomb on the Japanese; you have dropped the Chinese army on us."⁷⁷ The article went on to say that "General Chen Yi, appointed as the first governor of liberated Formosa and his officers, regarded Formosa as a rich spoil of war which was to compensate this fortunate company for all the losses and hardships of the war years."⁷⁸ It appears that the people who were writing about China during this period were definitely not in favor of Chiang. George H. Kerr wrote:

Chiang beleaguered on Formosa is even less useful as an ally than he was on the Mainland under the most favorable conditions. To continue either Military or economic aid now would only serve his personal ambitions briefly for his military and legal position is untenable.⁷⁹

Mr. Kerr was much unkind to Chiang in his work Formosa Betrayed,⁸⁰ which was completed much later than the

⁷⁷The Economist, "The Chinese in Formosa," an editorial, Vol. 157, July 23, 1949, p. 196.

⁷⁸Ibid.

⁷⁹Foreign Policy Bulletin, "What the United States Should do in Formosa," Vol. 29, No. 11, December 23, 1949.

⁸⁰George H. Kerr, Formosa Betrayed, (Cambridge, The Riverside Press, 1965).

the period toward which this paper is pointed.

The January 5, 1950 Decision

By the first part of the year of 1950, it became clear that a decision concerning Formosa would be mandatory. As Roger Hilsman put it:

There were members of Congress as in all areas of American life including the Executive, who saw that China was being lost to the West and that a radically new policy was necessary.⁸¹

The President was clearly aware that a bold program of intervention and support of the Nationalists would not be accepted by Congress or the American public. Therefore, on January 5, 1950, the President in a special message, declared:

The United States has no predatory designs on Formosa or on any other Chinese territory. The United States has no desire to obtain special rights or privileges or to establish military bases on Formosa at this time. Nor does it have any intention of utilizing its armed forces to interfere in the present situation. The United States will not pursue a course which will lead to involvement in the civil conflict in China. Similarly, the United States Government will not provide military aid or advice to Chinese forces on Formosa. In the view of the United States Government, the resources on Formosa are adequate to enable them

⁸¹A.M. Scott and R.H. Dawson, Readings in the Making of American Foreign Policy, "Congressional and Executive Relations and the Foreign Policy Consensus" by Roger Hilsman, (New York: Macmillan, 1965), p. 189.

to obtain the items which they might consider for the defense of the Island. The United States Government proposes to continue under existing legislative authority the present ECA program of economic assistance.⁸²

Shortly after the message was delivered, Secretary of State Acheson held a conference to explain why the phrase "at this time" was used in an otherwise firm declaration of policy. He pointed out that in case American Forces might be attacked in the Far East, the United States "must be completely free to take whatever action in whatever area is necessary for its own security."⁸³ He furthermore, in his press conference, revealed that the decisive reasons for the President's declaration were not strategic. "The underlying factors...are not in that area. They have to do with the fundamental integrity of the United States and with maintaining in the world the belief that when the United States takes a position it sticks to that position and does not change it by reason of transitory expediency or advantage on its part."⁸⁴

⁸²Department of State Bulletin, January 16, 1950, p. 79. "Italics mine"

⁸³Department of State Bulletin, January 16, 1950, p. 80.

⁸⁴The New York Times, January 6, 1950.

The interesting part of Secretary Acheson's theory toward the Far East is that he left the door completely open to develop another policy if necessary. In a speech before the National Press Club of Washington, D.C. on January 12--seven days after the President's declaration on Formosa--nothing was mentioned about Formosa, while almost every other country or problem area in the Western Pacific Basin or the Far East was mentioned, specifically, the Aluetians, Ryukus, Japan, Korea, Philippine, Australia, Malaya, Indonesia, China, India and Pakistan.⁸⁵ He furthermore warned that Russia would try to take over the northern provinces of China and continue to try to influence the Communist Chinese. There appeared to be a faint hope that mainland China could be worlds away from Soviet influence. He said that:

what does that /Soviet take-over of the Northern provinces, Outer Mongolia, Manchuria and Soviet influence in China/ mean for us. It means that nothing that we do and nothing that we say must obscure the reality of the fact. All the efforts of propaganda will not be able to obscure it. The only thing that can obscure it is the folly of ill-conceived adventures on our part which easily could do so and I urge all who are thinking about such foolish adventures to remember that we must not seize the uneviable position which the Russians have carved out for themselves. We must not undertake to deflect from the Russians to ourselves the righteous anger, and the wrath, and the hatred of the Chinese people which must develop. ...We must take the position we have al-

⁸⁵ Department of State Bulletin, January 23, 1950, p. 111.

ways taken--that anyone who violates the integrity of China is the enemy of China and is acting contrary to our own interest. .../we must/ keep our purposes perfectly straight, perfectly pure, and perfectly above board and do not get them mixed up with legal quibbles or the attempt to do one thing and really achieve the other.⁸⁶

This was not really contrary to previous United States policy toward China but it did serve notice to Communist China about thoughts of Soviet imperialism.

As to the concern of the security of the United States, he defined the defensive perimeter which:

runs along to the Aleutians to Japan and then goes to the Ryukyus...to the Philippine Islands.... So far as the military security of other areas in the Pacific is concerned, it must be clear that no person can guarantee these areas against attack. But it also must be clear that such a guarantee is hardly sensible or necessary within the realm of practical relationship.⁸⁷

He struck the key to the United States Government attitude in a later portion of the speech, in stating that:

Should an attack occur...the initial reliance must be on the people attacked to resist it and then upon the commitments of the entire civilized world under the Charter of the United Nations which so far has proved a weak reed to lean on by any people who are determined to protect their

⁸⁶Ibid., p. 115.

⁸⁷Department of State Bulletin, January 23, 1950, pp. 111-118.

independence against outside aggression.⁸⁸

As to the expected criticism that the decision would certainly arouse, primarily from Congress, Secretary Acheson felt that:

It would have been desireable from our point of view if the whole question of the Far East...and of Formosa...could have been discussed fully with members of both parties on the Hill before any statement was made. But one has to choose in this life, and it was more important to clarify thinking than it was to go on and have the most desireable of all possible things which is consultation.⁸⁹

In spite of immediate criticism which was to follow, it did not have much effect on Secretary Acheson's views on the policy. In an address before the Commonwealth Club of California at San Francisco on March 15, 1950, he covered the same points he reiterated the same points that he had made in his speech before the National Press Club two months earlier.⁹⁰ Again, in this speech, he mentioned practically every area of concern in Asia except Formosa.

Some observers had the impression that the Secretary of State practically told the Communists that the

⁸⁸Ibid., pp. 111-118. "Italics mine"

⁸⁹Department of State Bulletin, January 16, 1950, "United States Policy Towards Formosa," extemporaneous remarks by Secretary Acheson released on January 5, 1950.

⁹⁰Department of State Bulletin, March 27, 1950.

United States would not defend South Korea and Formosa against Asian Communist invasion. Among these were Senator Robert Taft and Dwight Eisenhower. Other critics were former President Hoover and Senators Smith and Vandenburg. They, however, failed to rally support. Harold L. Ickes wrote:

President Truman was more than right when he set American warmongers back on their heels by making it known that there would be no fishing by the United States in the turgid waters of Formosa. He must have seen the course proposed by the bumbling former President Hoover, with the support of the usually level-headed and high minded statesman, Senator Robert A. Taft, would be taking a step in the direction of a third devastating world war. Mr. Hoover's genuflections in the direction of the God of War, surprising as they are, are not so disturbing as the position of such men as Senator Taft...and Senator Smith.... The equivocal position of Senator Vandenburg is also cause for concern.⁹¹

The informed American public during this period was not unanimous in the decision to not do anything in the case of Formosa. In a poll completed on February 3, 1950, a slightly higher percentage indicated that some form of aid should be provided rather than take a "watch

⁹¹The New Republican, "Truman's Formosan Policy," Harold L. Ickes, Vol. 122, January 23, 1950, p. 17.

and wait" attitude.⁹²

While there were no immediate official announcements by the Chinese Nationalists concerning President Truman's January 5 Declaration, George H. Kerr wrote:

The Nationalists called President Truman's declaration a 'betrayal', and basic Chinese anti-foreign sentiment came welling to the surface. There was bitter talk in Taipei and on January 9, hot headed young officers aboard the Nationalist gunboat WULING shelled an American freighter as it moved toward Shanghai.⁹³

That certain factions of the Nationalists would be openly hostile to the Declaration is understandable. However,

⁹²AIFO, February 3, 1950

Of 60 percent of a sample who had heard or read about Formosa recently only 49 percent appeared well informed on the subject and was asked further: The United States could take any of the following three steps concerning the island of Formosa. Which of the steps do you think the government should take?

- | | |
|---|-----|
| (1) Use United States Armed Forces to protect and hold Formosa? | 10% |
| (2) Give financial aid and war materials to General Chiang Kai Shek to help the army hold the island? | 14% |
| (3) Do nothing now and wait to see what happens? | 21% |
| Informed on the subject but no opinions as to what should be done? | 4% |

Public Opinion Quarterly, Summer, 1950, Vol. XIV.

⁹³George H. Kerr, Formosa Betrayed, (Cambridge, The Riverside Press, 1965), p. 387.

it is felt that the Nationalists, in general, foresaw the future course of United States policy toward Formosa after the publication of the White Paper or even before that, and again, would not take any action to arouse opinion against their own cause.

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